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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KHARTOUM 001589

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG AND
NEA/ARP
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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SUBJECT: DARFUR PEACE PROCESS: QATAR AND SUDAN PEOPLE'S
INITIATIVE

REF: KHARTOUM 1588

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)
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11. (C) SUMMARY: On October 27 and 28, CDA Fernandez and
polchief met with leaders from the Joint Mediation Support
Team, National Congress Party, and other political parties to
discuss the Sudan People's Initiative and potential
negotiations in Qatar on Darfur. Contacts expressed
conflicting messages about the linkage between these two
initiatives, the timeframe for Doha talks, and the readiness
of rebels for such talks. END SUMMARY.

NATIONAL CONGRESS PARTY
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12. (SBU) SPI: On October 27, the head of the NCP's
Political Bureau Mandour Al-Mahdi told polchief that the
Sudan People's Initiative (SPI) has been very successful thus
far. Mahdi stated that all major political opposition
parties participated, and that the initiative's leadership is
still persuading the two parties that did not attend (the
Popular Congress Party and the Communist Party) to
participate. Mahdi said that the seven working level
committees submitted their reports on October 26 to a team
led by Khartoum University Professor Tayyeb Haj Atia which
will edit and compile the individual reports. (Note: The
seven committees are as follows: 1. Options 2.
IDPS/Refugees 3. International Impact 4. Media and
Information 5. Security 6. Reconciliation 7.
Development. End Note.) This report will be presented for
debate, revision, and approval to a plenary session of the
SPI the week of November 2. Mahdi stated that the "Options
Committee" encountered the most difficulty in drafting a
report. This large committee of over eighty participants
discussed the contentious issues of creating one region for
all of Darfur, the position of a Vice President for a
Darfuri, and border issues. According to the NCP's Mandour
Al-Mahdi the Darfur Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC)
led by UNAMID's Abdul Mohammed is "vitally important" to the
peace process. Mahdi stated that the DDDC will take the
results of the SPI and hold consultations in Darfur with
IDPs, civil society and traditional leaders, and other
constituencies. The SPI has developed a website
(darfur-forum.sd) where it will collect feedback and share
its work.

13. (SBU) QATARI INITIATIVE: Mahdi labeled the Qatari
involvement in the peace process as "a major Arab and African
initiative" but downplayed the AU/UN Chief Mediator's role
stating, "Bassole needs to integrate his efforts into what is

going on in Qatar." Polchief stated the U.S. feels strongly that the Chief Mediator should be in charge of the peace process and that other initiatives should follow his lead, not vice versa. Mahdi stated that rebel movements are interested in Qatar and that the JEM has agreed to participate. (NOTE: The JMST later told CDA Fernandez that JEM has not agreed to participate. Other sources stated that JEM is willing to send a representative to Doha to explore participating in future talks in Qatar, but that JEM has not/not committed to participate. END NOTE.) Mahdi stated that although Abdul Wahid Al-Nur (who Mahdi called "Mr. No") has refused to participate, "Qatar has a strong relationship with France and the French can force Abdul Wahid to go if they want." Mahdi stated that Bassole needs to establish his credibility early "as people waited for Eliasson and Salim for a year and nothing happened." Mahdi said that negotiations will begin in Doha in November, corresponding with a timeline established by Qatar, but the GoS has not discussed offering unilateral incentives or early confidence building measures that would bring the rebel movements to Doha. "The creation of one state, for example, is such a contentious issue that I think the only way to resolve it is to have a referendum, not to offer it as way to bring the rebels to the table," stated Mahdi. Mahdi stated that the semi-moribund 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement will not complicate future negotiations "as we all agreed it should be the basis for future talks" and stated that he expects elections can be held on schedule in Darfur in 2009 ("as 95% of Darfur was included in the census.")

SPI LEADERS MIRIAM MAHDI AND ABDUL MUHAMMAD

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14. (SBU) Also on October 27, Umma party representative and daughter of Sadiq Al-Mahdi, Miriam Mahdi (note: designated hereafter as MMahdi), told polchief that work is proceeding well with the Sudan People's Initiative. (Note: MMahdi participated in the opening sessions of the SPI, one of its committees, and is now working on Tayyeb Haj Atia's team charged with compiling one document. End Note.) MMahdi stated that the SPI is a significant development in Sudan as there was freedom of speech, diverse participation, and a concentrated focus on Darfur, however she cautioned, "we need to see this turn into action with a tangible outcome." MMahdi said that most of the SPI's committees completed their work in a timely and effective manner. The two exceptions to this, she noted, are the Options and Security committees. MMahdi said that members of both of these committees claimed that their individual committees' reports did not include all members views. This complaint forced the Options Committee to revise their document, while the Security committee submitted its report "which is too polite of a document and reflects the political orientation of its authors, not the committee's membership." Mahdi said that the SPI's relationship to future Qatari negotiations is not clear, as the SPI is "all about showing that the Sudanese can come together in an open environment and solve their problems by themselves."

15. (SBU) Abdul Mohamed (UNAMID's acting Political Affairs chief, head of the DDDC, and member of the Options Committee) also characterized the SPI as "very positive" to polchief in an October 27 meeting. Abdul Mohamed said he views the start of the SPI as focusing on consultation with opposition political parties. The crucial consultation with Darfuris (particularly civil society leaders, IDPs, and traditional leaders) in Darfur will be next, followed finally by "consultations in the Diaspora with Darfuris abroad and rebel leaders abroad." When asked whether the Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST) would be responsible for this final consultation with rebel leaders, Abdul Mohamed responded, "no, we in the DDDC will be responsible for that too." These consultations, said Mohamed, will build on the SPI's work, taking it outside of Khartoum to survey opinions about future solutions to Darfur. This three-stepped consultation process

will take 1.5 to 2 months and will "be called a consultative process, not the DDDC, as many of the rebel groups reject the DDDC because it was created by the DPA." Mohamed stated that he had just met with Vice President Taha on October 27 who offered his "categorical support" for such a plan, and that he would be meeting with Intelligence Chief Salah Gosh on October 28 to discuss this idea he labeled "common ground consultations." Mohamed noted that it is important that all of this work lays a foundation for negotiations in Qatar "which should be delayed at least two months." Mohamed acknowledged that the DPA will complicate future negotiations and "the GoS will not give any money to Minni Minnawi right now, because they are afraid it will entrench him and make him less flexible for any future negotiations."

NEW JMST DEPUTY AZOUZ ENNIFAR

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¶6. (SBU) SPI: On October 28, Azouz Ennifar (the newly appointed Deputy Chief Mediator for the AU/UN's Joint Mediation Support Team) told CDA Fernandez that while overall very positive, the SPI has just been an exercise for Khartoum's elite and "not ordinary Darfuris and the IDPs in the camp." Ennifar expressed hope that the SPI's reports would reflect the positive exchange of differing viewpoints on Darfur, but that opposition parties of one of the seven committees (i.e. the Options committee) contested the preliminary report. Ennifar agreed that the exercise of the SPI or any future negotiations will have to have a tangible effect on the ground in Darfur to change the opinion of ordinary Darfuris "who have seen failed peace agreements and negotiations for the last three years."

¶7. (C) QATARI INITIATIVE: Ennifar stated that he will meet Chief Mediator Bassole in Doha on October 29 for meetings "to learn what the Qataris are actually planning." Ennifar acknowledged that "if Qatar does not succeed, it will negatively affect us in the JMST and we need to take that very seriously." Ennifar agreed with CDA Fernandez that the relationship between Qatar and President Bashir's NCP elicits "deep suspicion" and that any future negotiations will need to focus on tangible outcomes, "rather than the NCP's normal

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strategy of process over results." According to Ennifar, the Chief Mediator does not want to rush into any process and he will assess whether the Qatari vision for the peace process coincides with his own roadmap. JMST Chief of Staff Sabra stated that the GoQ along with the Arab League ("who has \$250 million unspent USD left over this year for Darfur") can use their financial resources to encourage the rebels to participate in talks in Doha. According to Sabra, the Justice and Equality Movement (while not yet agreeing to participate in negotiations) is more organized, politically developed, and ready for negotiations than Abdul Wahid Al-Nur and SLM/Unity. According to Sabra, the JMST could start by securing, but not signing, a deal with JEM who would then have to wait for other movements to follow rather than following the disastrous 2006 "Abuja model" of one rebel faction agreeing to an agreement. The GoS will need to unilaterally offer concessions to bring other rebel movements to the table, agreed Ennifar.

JMST STAFFING, CHD, AND DDDC

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¶8. (SBU) Sabra and JMST Senior Political Advisor Boubou Niang later told poloffs on October 28 that the JMST visit to Qatar will be immediately followed by a visit to Libya and then onto other regional states. According to Sabra, "Sudan's neighbors feel left out of the SPI and the Qatari initiative and so we are reaching out to them." This is particular worrisome with the Libyans who are not above bankrolling or energizing rebel factions in Darfur if they feel cut out of the process. Sabra stated that with recent new hires, the JMST is finally recovering from a summer of massive turnover. (Note: Of the approximately 15 person JMST staff, Sabra and Niang are the only remaining staff

members from 2007. Sabra will finish in his capacity as chief of staff in mid-December 2008 when he will return to a position in New York.) Sabra acknowledged that Bassole's prefers to have a smaller, more mobile, and more geographically diversified staff, and that JMST representatives will soon be located in all three of Darfur's states.

¶9. (C) Sabra stated that while Bassole appreciates the work of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, this organization will focus only on humanitarian aspects of the conflict. (Note: CHD's Theo Murphy has been unhelpfully pressing polchief and poloff for months requesting more of a role in the JMST and asking for USG intervention on CHD's behalf. End Note.) Poloff stated that some of CHD's ambitions are very political (reftel) and touch upon issues such as ceasefire commission and building the ground work and relationships with rebels necessary for negotiations. "The CFC is dependent on a political settlement, and so any talk about this coming out of a humanitarian need is premature," stated Niang. Sabra stated that Bassole recently met with CHD and implied that this relationship between the JMST and CHD would not become any closer in the coming months.

¶10. (C) While supportive of the DDDC, both Niang and Sabra emphasized that it should not impinge upon or be confused with the work of Chief Mediator Bassole or the JMST. Sabra stated that the DDDC's Abdul Mohamed "resuscitated" the SPI, that Sudanese politicians "love him," and that he understands Sudanese politics. Nonetheless, Niang and Sabra warned that Mohamed may be confusing rebel leaders about who is in charge of the peace process, that some Sudanese politicians have already started to think that he is part of the negotiating team, and that Abdul Mohamed's timelines and discussions with Sudanese politicians should be carefully coordinated with the Chief Mediator and UNAMID's Joint Special Representative Adada. Niang said that Mohamed "hijacked" the chairmanship of the DDDC "as it is actually supposed to be a notable Sudanese" and that it is not appropriate for the Ethiopian Abdul Mohamed to be serving in multiple roles (political affairs chief, head of DDDC, and a leading member of the SPI.) (Note: On October 25 meeting Dutch polchief told poloff that he believes that Abdul Mohamed is ineffective and that a new political affairs chief should be appointed to UNAMID immediately, "although we've heard there are no immediate candidates." Dutch polchief said that UNAMID political affairs is in a "sad state of neglect" and cited a recent meeting where Abdul Mohamed's appeared woefully ineffective. End Note.)

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COMMENT

¶11. (C) The NCP's Mandour Mahdi showed how disconnected, unrealistic, and clueless some members of the NCP are about future negotiations, rebel participation, elections in Darfur, and the complex relationship between the DPA and a future agreement. While the DDDC's Abdul Mohamed should be commended for his recent energy and ambition, it is troubling that his "common ground consultations" include the rebel movements. This is not only treading on Bassole's territory, but it gives the NCP the impression that UNAMID and the JMST have already bought uncritically into the SPI, Mohamed's timeframe, and any linkages that may come out of it. The peace process needs a clear, decisive, and authoritative leader at this crucial time. Whether Bassole will step-up from his slow start and take charge of many competing initiatives remains to be seen. While we are seeing a higher quality of process in the SPI than in past Sudanese conclaves on Darfur, it is still far from clear that this is a legitimate effort which could actually relieve the sufferings of Darfur rather than just strengthen the NCP's hold on power. FERNANDEZ